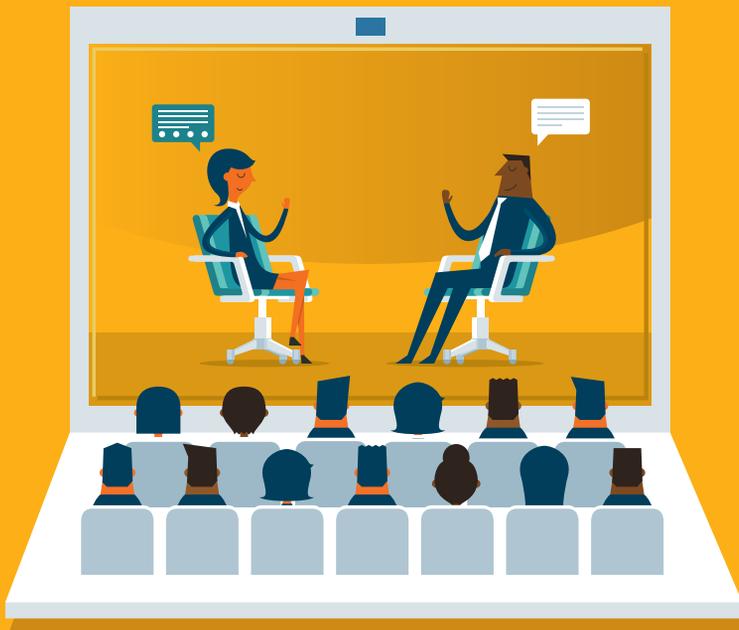


# PARKING

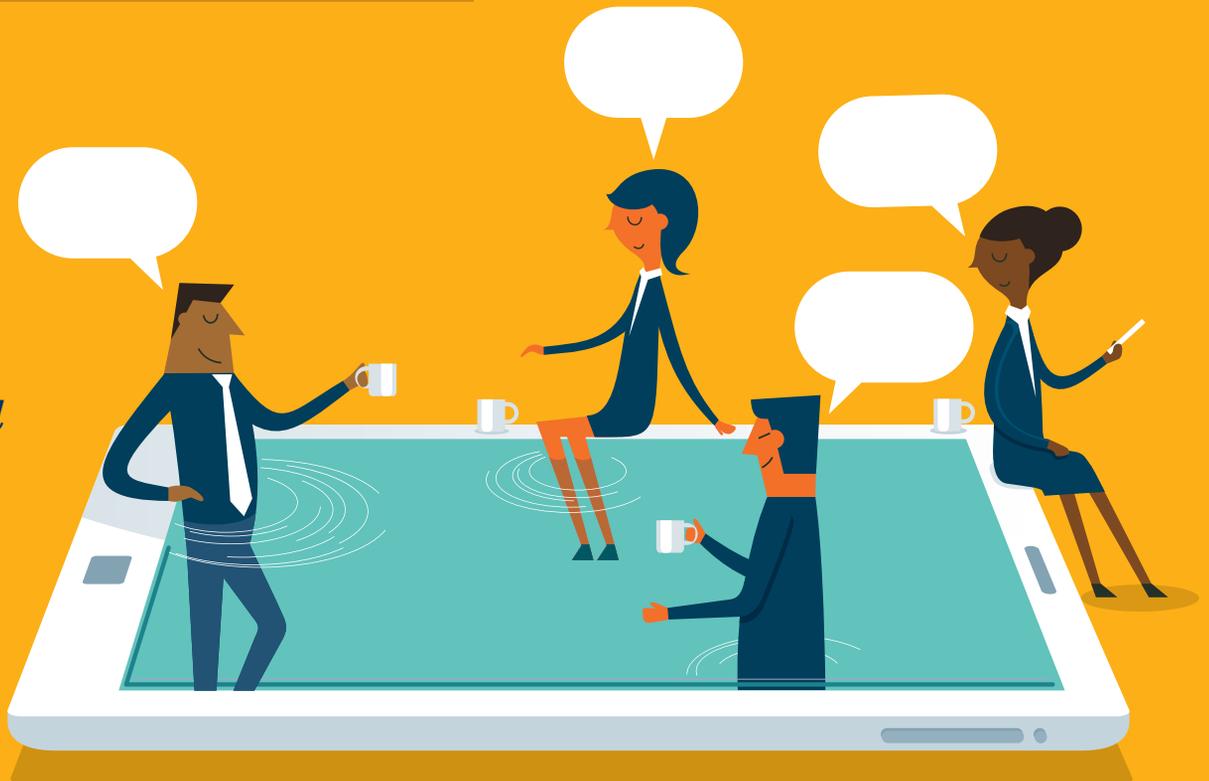
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# A Storied Career Comes to A Close: Gary Cudney Retires

**G**ARY CUDNEY RETIRED THIS SPRING after more than 36 years in parking. The former president & CEO of Carl Walker, Inc., Cudney oversaw the firm's merger with WGI and retired as senior vice president of WGI, completing the transition of the leadership of the firm's parking division. He is known as a visionary leader and mentor to many parking professionals across the U.S. *Parking & Mobility* had the opportunity to speak with him about his career, the parking industry, and what he sees in the future.



**P&M: Thirty-six years is a long time to spend in one industry, much less a single company. How did you get into the parking industry?**

**Gary Cudney:** When I started my career, I couldn't have imagined ending up in parking. In 1984 I was a structural engineer working for American Hoist & Derrick, a company that built cranes and derricks, and I worked for the off-shore oil rig crane division. My wife and I both grew up in Grand Rapids, Mich., and we wanted to get back to Michigan. At the time, Carl Walker was starting his new firm in Kalamazoo and I was his first hire.

**P&M: Did you immediately take to parking?**

**GC:** It was completely different. For American Hoist & Derrick, I was working entirely with steel. There was no concrete. I was doing very complex engineering and it was a great job. They couldn't believe I would leave their business for parking! They gave me a Little Tykes parking garage as a going away gift. At the time, the US economy was in recession, and they figured I'd be back when things picked up. It's a good thing I quickly enjoyed parking because they were out of business in a couple of years.

**P&M: I guess your timing was pretty good then. What were your initial perceptions of the parking industry?**

**GC:** Mostly, I remember Carl Walker. Carl was a big personality. He was great at networking and he was an incredible structural engineer/parking consultant and a great teacher. He had a plane and we would fly together all over the place, visiting contacts, clients, and prospects. I immediately loved it, and for 36 years I never stopped loving it.

**P&M: What about parking attracted you?**

**GC:** When you're a structural engineer and working on other types of buildings,

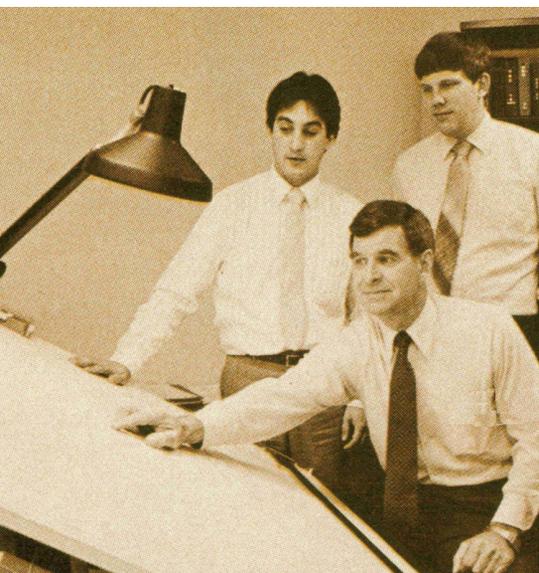
your role is diminished. You have your piece and that's what you work on. In parking, we do much more: structural design, parking consulting, and prime project management. I always kept learning and the work was always interesting.

I was also very active in all of the groups, including IPI, and now IPMI. I love the camaraderie of the parking business and I've always loved going to the industry conferences and reconnecting with people.

**IPMI: How do you feel about leaving this behind?**

**GC:** As we're talking, I'm working on two big parking garages for Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids. The airport has grown so much that it is literally out of covered parking, and on these projects, I'm helping design an expansion and a new rental car facility. Fortunately, I will keep connected with these projects after I retire, working on the designs and serving as a mentor. So, I'll keep my finger in the industry.

But I'm looking forward to retirement. My wife and I are planning to spend a lot more time with our 11 grandchildren. Our four children have their own families now, and we love to be together. There's a lot to look forward to.



**IPMI: You mentioned the jobs you're working on in Grand Rapids right now. Looking back on your career, are there any projects that you're particularly proud of?**

**GC:** Certainly, the first parking structure I designed, Campau Square in Grand Rapids. It was really advanced for its time, with precast panels with burgundy trim, technology that was state-of-the-art at the time, and glass-backed elevator and stair towers. Also, the West Garage at Boston's Logan Airport. It's attached to the airport's Central Garage, and it was our first parking structure with circular helix ramps and it had integrated rental carparking.

Another special garage is Atlantic Station in Atlanta. It was developed on land from an old repurposed steel mill, and it was built into the side of a hill. There were 8,000 parking spaces and on top of the parking structure there are 16 city blocks of streets, retail, and commercial development. It even has four high-rise buildings on it. It's a really special, creative development.

**IPMI: Are there any types of projects that you particularly enjoyed working on?**

**GC:** I probably enjoy designing airport garages the most because they are bigger and more complex. In the end, you usually get a more sophisticated design. Over my career, I was involved in the design of airport parking garages at Louisville, Dallas/Fort Worth, Wichita, Pensacola, Dayton, Buffalo, Atlanta, Norfolk, and Columbus Airports, and of course Logan and Grand Rapids.

I love the buildings, and I like to visit them and park in them. But, when I think about the projects, I always most remember the people who I worked with on each.

**IPMI: How has the industry changed since you joined it in 1984?**

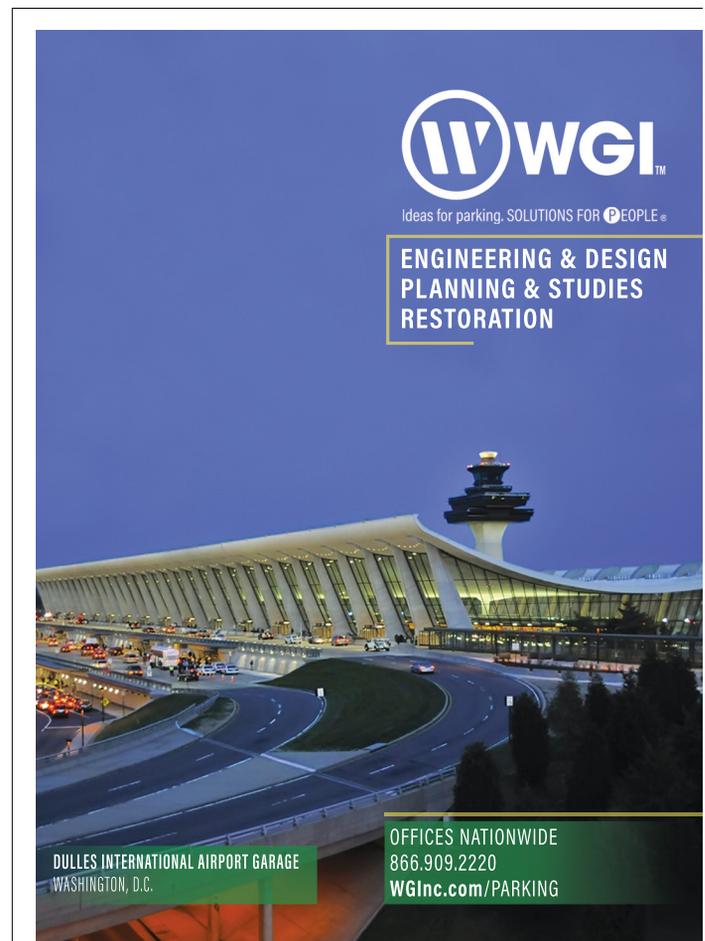
**GC:** So much has changed over the years. For one, the projects themselves have changed. When I started, we were typically just doing garages. Now, mixed-use design is more common. That has been a great thing for me because I had a chance to work with architects on mixed-use projects and I continued to learn a lot.

The growth of technology has also been a big change. For starters, the concrete technology has changed, so garages are much more durable today. Also, the technology that's installed in garages, like revenue control equipment, has advanced so much. When I started, we didn't even have computers on our desks. Now, our iPhones have greater technology by far than our first PCs. I started with hand drawings: ink on mylar. Now, everything is done with computers. And there has been more change in the last 10 years than in all the previous 25 years.

The evolution of electric vehicle technology in garages has also been interesting. There was a big movement about 15 years ago toward electric recharging technology, and then that fell off a bit. Now electric vehicle use is becoming more common.

Delivery methods have also changed. Design-build and now P3 projects are more common, allowing us to partner with contractors, developers, automated parking companies, and parking operators on projects.

It will be interesting to see how autonomous vehicles change driving habits and impact parking design. WGI has a trademarked design process called FlexPark that revolves around designing garages that are adaptable to other uses if parking demand falls. It requires special design features up front to adapt in the future, including specially located ramps and elevators, and façade and infrastructure features. It's really interesting designing for an unknown and unknowable future, and these types of approaches provide flexibility to our clients. If demand doesn't fall, they still have a useful, functional garage.



The image is a promotional graphic for WGI. At the top right is the WGI logo, which consists of a stylized 'W' inside a circle followed by 'WGI' in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the logo is the tagline 'Ideas for parking. SOLUTIONS FOR PEOPLE®'. In the center, there is a white box with a yellow border containing the text 'ENGINEERING & DESIGN', 'PLANNING & STUDIES', and 'RESTORATION'. The background of the graphic is a photograph of the Dulles International Airport at night, showing the terminal building with its distinctive tower and the parking garage in the foreground. At the bottom left, there is a green box with white text that reads 'DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT GARAGE' and 'WASHINGTON, D.C.'. At the bottom right, there is another green box with white text that reads 'OFFICES NATIONWIDE', '866.909.2220', and 'WGI.com/PARKING'.

**IPMI: You mentioned your new firm, WGI. You were instrumental in merging Carl Walker, Inc. with WGI. How did that come about?**

**GC:** We realized that the industry had become bigger than parking and we thought that, strategically, it made more sense to be part of a larger, multi-disciplinary firm that is committed to providing technology-based solutions. I was particularly interested in finding a larger firm with an existing transportation group where we could integrate parking, mobility, transportation, and transit in one place. We found what we were looking for—WGI even has a vice president of new mobility and connected communities and as well as a manager of transportation technologies and connected communities—and the acquisition was completed on July 1, 2017.

The deal opened up many more opportunities for us to work in new areas of the country with WGI's many offices. For instance, overnight, we went from no offices in Florida to eight. When WGI subsequently acquired Big Red Dog, we added four new offices in Texas. With the mergers of WGI, Carl Walker, and Big Red Dog, we integrated our structural and parking divisions and became a single group that can handle parking, marine engineering, and high-rise vertical structures, and we all share resources. We have more capabilities to pursue interesting and complex work because now we can do the whole mixed-use building, not just the parking.



**IPMI: Now that the merger is successfully completed, where do you go from here?**

**GC:** Well, as I mentioned, my wife and I plan to spend a lot of time with our out-of-state kids and grandchildren, visiting them and vacationing together to ski, hike, bike, and enjoy the beach. Our four sons and their families are spread out, two in Chicago and two in Ohio, so we plan to do a bit of traveling to spend time with them. We also are active in our church and plan to serve there more including going with a group from church on a disaster relief project.

I'll keep an eye on the parking industry too. There's a lot of really interesting and exciting change coming, not just from TNCs and autonomous vehicles, but with self-parking vehicles too. I would love to help develop systems to allow self-parking vehicles to wind their way through garages to find parking and park themselves. I'm also a big proponent of cashless payment technology, LPR, Bluetooth, and parking guidance, and I expect that we'll be seeing a lot more sophisticated technology from those sectors. ♦

